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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 002011

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [CASC](#) [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: DELTA VIOLENCE UPDATE FOR SEPTEMBER 30

REF: A. ABUJA 1675

[1](#)B. ABUJA 1673

[1](#)C. LAGOS 1998

[1](#)D. LAGOS 1982

[1](#)E. LAGOS 1978

[1](#)F. ABUJA 1656

[1](#)G. ABUJA 1486

[1](#)H. LAGOS 1892

[1](#)I. LAGOS 1820

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reasons 1.5 (B & D)

Summary

[1](#)1. (S) Local press headlined today with news of government meetings with Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) leader Asari in Abuja and purported cease-fire agreement. NGO and energy company contacts stated that the situation in Port Harcourt was less tense. Production remains unchanged. There have been no reports on incidents involving Americans. Apparently rival Delta militant leader Ateke Tom also has traveled to Abuja to participate in talks with the GON, and the GON has summoned Rivers State Governor Odili as well. Local press is now openly discussing the Joint Task Force Operation Flush Out.

Security Update

[1](#)2. (U) Local press headlined today with news of government meetings with Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) leader Asari in Abuja, stating that the GON and Asari had agreed to a cease-fire. See reftel Abuja 1675.

[1](#)3. (C) Marine and Naval Attache returned 30 September from a 3-day trip to the Port Harcourt area. His NGO and oil company sources indicates the overall security situation in Port Harcourt is quiet, particularly in the city itself. His sources tended to discount Asari's assertion that he was the head a genuine Ijaw malcontent movement. They saw Asari as a political thug/bunkerer who was trying to cloak himself with Ijaw populism in order to vieil the illicit pecuniary activities that are his real motivators. However, he explained that there are oil facilities or personnel, whether due to their geographical location or operational nature, that have minimal or no real security protection and that are vulnerable to the local gangs. While the Attache's contacts largely downplayed the possibility of a large-scale operation by the local militias, they predicted that small-scale attacks typical of the delta region may continue as usual. Further reporting on the Attache's visit to Port Harcourt will be transmitted via DOD channels.

[1](#)4. (S) The Attache also notes that he has received information that rival Delta militant leader Ateke Tom traveled to Abuja on 29 September, (separately from Asari), to participate in talks with the GON. He notes there are rumors that Asari has been talking to the GON for several weeks. He also was informed that that the GON has summoned Rivers State Governor Odili to Abuja as well.

[1](#)5. (U) Unconfirmed press stated that the GON soldiers conducted an operation in attacked the Gbali community in Degema local government area of Rivers on September 23 and 29, in search of bunkerers who had reportedly disarmed military personnel guarding oil installations in the area. The press quoted a resident saying, that the town is now a "ghost town taken over by the military in under terrible occupation and seizure." Army PRO Second Brigade Nigerian Army Port Harcourt confirmed the military had visited the town twice in the last 10 days, uncovering an undisclosed quantity of arms and ammunition in village.

Reports from the Energy Sector

[1](#)6. (SBU) Shell: Shell External Relations Director was optimistic about the ceasefire and GON discussions with Asari. There are no changes in the Shell production situation.

17. (C) Chevron Texaco: The Chevron Texaco MDof Onshore Operations reported that the situation in Port Harcourt is calmer, given the news of a cease-fire. Chevron continues to operate at regular production levels. Chevron Texaco Environmental and Safety officer seconded this assessment. She also detailed the security arrangements under which Chevron personnel are currently operating: Chevron uses a 5-tier security system; they are currently at tier 3 in Port Harcourt, which prohibits movement of any Chevron personnel without a GON armed escort.

18. (U) Forosal Drilling: Forosal Drilling contacts also indicated that the situation in Port Harcourt was calm.

ACS Update

19. (SBU) There have been no reports on incidents involving Americans.

Press

110. (U) While the Nigerian press was somewhat reluctant to cover military operations in the Delta, the dailies have not been bashful about covering the purported ceasefire. Most major newspapers awarded front page coverage to GON-Asari talks. One paper headlined with news that the "U.S. directs citizens to quit Niger Delta," quoting related statements from DOS spokesman Richard Boucher.
BROWNE